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Sixty-seventh session

20th plenary meeting
Monday, 1 October 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Albert del Rosario, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Del Rosario (Philippines): Allow me to congratulate the President on his election and to offer the steadfast support of my country for his term.

Each year we renew our commitment to our United Nations and to the Charter that enshrines, in the plainest of language, our hopes and aspirations for a progressive, peaceful and secure world. Our Organization and our Charter have survived and thrived through dark times and great adversity. The letter and spirit of the Charter remain alive and vibrant in a constantly changing world. Our work continues to be important, even in the face of doubts about the relevance of multilateral institutions.

All that was possible because at the heart of our determination to build peace has been our commitment to the rule of law. Keeping faith in the law allows us to treat each other fairly and in the spirit of sovereign equality. It provides the rules that enable nations to relate to one another and work together. It reduces arbitrariness and unilateralism. Fidelity to the rule of law allows us not only the means to resolve differences but also the substance on which to build better understanding.

Our advocacy for the rule of law not only is born of our experience and insights as a founding Member of the United Nations and an active participant in international affairs, but also is deeply rooted in our experience as a nation. Our freedom was hard-won. Our democracy was achieved only after decades of dictatorship. Our governance was sullied by corruption and patronage in previous years.

Our President, Benigno S. Aquino III, has placed the rule of law at the centre of his governance. As a result, the culture of impunity has been neutralized, our economy is on the upswing and our people's rights and freedoms are assured.

Among the gravest threats that continue to face us today is the deadly testament of man's ability to destroy his fellow man. The full force of the rule of law must be brought to bear to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to promote nuclear disarmament and to end the flow of illicit weapons. The Philippines is proud to have presided over the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The historic adoption of the 64 action points strengthened the legal regime of the Treaty.

We also support nuclear-weapon-free zones, including the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone created by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It is essential that such a zone be created

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for the volatile Middle East, as envisaged by the 2010 Review Conference. The Philippines commends the States of the region, the depository States of the 1995 resolution 50/78, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Government of Finland for setting the stage for the 2012 Conference that will pursue that most urgent objective.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is another critical pillar of global disarmament and non-proliferation. The Philippines commends Indonesia for being the latest annex 2 State to ratify the Treaty, and it reiterates its call to the remaining eight annex 2 States to accede at the soonest possible time. Other States not included in annex 2, but not parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, must do the same to ensure the universality of the Treaty.

We must also actively pursue respect for the law of peace and humanitarian law in the numerous regional conflicts that affect the lives, safety and well-being of millions of people around the world. Towards that end, peacekeeping is the crucial tool by which the Charter's mandate is carried out. Despite its limited resources, the Philippines is doing its part in that important task. We are currently a major contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions. We call on others to also do all that they can. And we support innovative efforts to help embattled communities, including proposals on possible unarmed peacekeeping that would expand the civilian component of our endeavours.

The Philippines also recognizes the important role of women in the promotion of peace and continues to deploy more female peacekeepers to peacekeeping missions. We aim to attain and surpass the 10 per cent deployment target of women in country troop contingents and 20 per cent for police deployments.

With a tenth of the population of our country in foreign lands, there is a very real and human dimension to our quest to strengthen the rule of law. To further galvanize international dialogue and cooperation, the Philippines has been among the principal advocates for developing norms of international law that will protect not only our overseas Filipinos but all migrants. Human trafficking is a crime of such magnitude that it cannot be dealt with by a single nation or even by a group of nations. The international community as a whole must stand together against that scourge. For that reason, the Philippines became a founding member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, and we are the main sponsor of the biennial General Assembly resolution on trafficking in women and girls.

In pursuit of that objective, we call on all Member States to implement the Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons and to ratify and enforce human rights instruments such as the Palermo Protocol and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Many of my country's overseas Filipinos are found on merchant ships. Filipinos form the bulk of seafarers. Many have fallen victim to pirates. Maritime piracy continues to be a menace to the entire world. A full 80 per cent of world trade travels by sea — almost six billion tons of cargo, moved by some 93,000 merchant vessels, manned by 1.25 million seafarers. The business and human costs of piracy cannot be overstated. We support bilateral, multilateral, regional and interregional efforts to address the impact of piracy, including measures to improve the welfare of affected seafarers.

The Philippine Constitution values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for all human rights. Our National Human Rights Action Plan 2009-2014 aims to mainstream human rights standards into all parts of the national Government and national life. The Plan fully respects our obligations under the eight major international human rights treaties.

As a founding and current member of the Human Rights Council, the Philippines works with the other members of the Council to safeguard the human rights of vulnerable groups, such as migrants, women, children, young people, the elderly, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. The Philippines has actively contributed to initiatives on human rights, extreme poverty, human rights education, combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and climate change.

The Philippines was one of the first nations to submit to the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council. Last month, the Council adopted by consensus our second report under that review mechanism.

The noble vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of many other profound declarations is far from being realized for the poor, the deprived, the oppressed and the marginalized. The recent global financial and economic crises have left such vulnerable

sectors of our societies in even greater danger. The Philippine Government therefore strongly supports measures for the empowerment of those disadvantaged and endangered groups and strongly advocates policies that aim to raise their participation and integration in society.

For that reason, it is important to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to plan for the post-MDG period, after 2015. Accordingly, the Philippines, together with Tanzania, initiated resolution 66/124, entitled "High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities". The 2013 High-level Meeting seeks the inclusiveness of the disabled, a cause to which all should rally.

We are instituting measures to enhance the role and the status of women and are strengthening their protection through the Philippine Commission on Women, whose foundation predates the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, through the key legislation of the Magna Carta of Women and through the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development 1995-2015.

Migration remains an unheralded and underappreciated dimension of globalization today. Yet the reality is that hundreds of millions live and work outside their native lands, providing benefits to both their host nations and their countries of origin. The Global Forum on Migration and Development, which the Philippines chaired in 2008, allows us to share our practical experiences in migration management and in protecting the rights and welfare of all migrants. We look forward to a successful outcome of the Forum summit in Port Louis, Mauritius, in November.

Earlier this year, the Philippines was pleased to ratify two key international instruments that affect migrants everywhere, namely, the Maritime Labour Convention and the Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers. Our ratification brings those two agreements into force next year.

As a further indication of our commitment to protecting the rights of migrants, the Philippines will co-host a regional meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, under the title "International Migrant Domestic Care Workers at the Interface of Migration and Development", in Manila later this month, with the support of UN-Women, the International Labour Organization and the International Organization for Migration.

The rule of law is an instrument of justice and development. Yet the continuing global economic challenges and financial instability make it even more important that we focus on ensuring that the rule of law gives everyone their due. Poverty, hunger, poor health and education and a deteriorating environment are threats to all and require nothing less than our concerted and collective response.

In all development efforts, we must respect the principles and norms of sustainability that are crucial to the continued health of the Earth and of our peoples. Consequently, the Philippines will further integrate key ideas from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development into the review of its medium-term development plan, even as we continue to pursue the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

For many developing countries such as the Philippines, food security remains a crucial issue. Recent events have shown that the capacity to source affordable food can affect millions of people, sometimes even to the extent of their sheer survival. We express our appreciation to the General Assembly for the adoption of resolution 66/222, declaring 2014 the International Year of Family Farming.

As a country particularly prone to natural disasters, including those wrought by climate change, we value the work being done in advancing the management of natural disaster risk reduction. Global and regional cooperation through partnerships is the best way to strengthen the international humanitarian and emergency response system.

Natural disasters plague mankind. The forces of nature are difficult to contain. That should not be the case in humankind's quest for peace. While natural disasters are impossible to prevent, the same is not true of war and conflict.

The United Nations was created to protect the weak from the strong, to provide for the equality of all sovereign States and to enshrine the rule of law as the governing principle in regulating international disputes.The Philippines is therefore steadfast in promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes through a rules-based approach. We stand firmly behind the efforts of the United Nations to promote the rule of law and mediation.

In 1982, we adopted the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes. This year marks its thirtieth anniversary. The principles and processes set out in the Manila Declaration remain applicable to this day and are a stark reminder that we have yet to overcome the barriers that divide countries and peoples throughout the planet. For that reason, we share the President's view that "Bringing about the adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" is essential to the future peace, progress and prosperity of all nations.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the rule of law, and given the maritime disputes that have intensified in the Asian region, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has never been more relevant than it is today. All States must respect their obligations to settle their maritime disputes by peaceful means under UNCLOS, without the threat or use of force. A rules-based approach under UNCLOS can peacefully resolve the Asian maritime disputes.

Today, my country faces its most serious challenge — a challenge to the security of its maritime domain and the integrity of its national territory, as well as its effective protection of its marine environment. To address this challenge and to arrive at a durable resolution, we must rely on the rule of law and not the force of arms. We must rely on the body of rules that state that disputes must be resolved peacefully. We must rely on the norms and rules enshrined in UNCLOS. We therefore rely on our friends and allies and all those who believe in the peaceful and fair management of the seas and oceans to uphold the rule of law and UNCLOS. We will endeavour to elicit a more proactive approach from the General Assembly.

We often hear the quote that "we are a country of laws and not of men". I shall modify it to say that "we are a community of nations and not of hegemons". Let us make this a reality. Let us all, without exception, respect the international legal framework to utilize institutions and adhere to commitments in treaties and conventions. For in so doing, we create global norms that will serve our nations in good stead today and in the future, and we will preserve the one great institution that we have charged with promoting peace and prosperity in our world, our United Nations. If we achieve this, rather than being forced to accept that might is right, we will instead demonstrate that right is might.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Mr. Elrington (Belize): It is my distinct honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the Government and people of Belize. I wish to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that he will guide the deliberations of the Assembly in a forthright and skilful manner.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm Belize's unequivocal commitment to the principles, goals and ideals of the United Nations, and to pledge our unconditional support for the success of its endeavours. Based on its performance over the past 67 years, we feel confident to opine that, whereas the United Nations is unquestionably imperfect, just as our democracy is imperfect, our United Nations is also, however — like democracy — the best institution devised by mankind dedicated exclusively to achieving a safer, more just and prosperous world.

As the twenty-first century inexorably evolves, laying bare the fragility and vulnerability of our planet to dangerous global forces, both natural and man-made, which threaten the existence of all living things on our planet, the genius and prescience of the founding fathers in creating the United Nations is illuminated beyond doubt. It is probably debatable whether in 1945 the imperative for mankind to work together in harmony to ensure the survival of our very planet was appreciated by all nations. It may be questionable whether it was universally appreciated in 1945 that it was absolutely necessary to have a global institution dedicated to the protection of mankind against man's penchant for causing destruction as well as against Nature's destructive elements and forces. Today, however, the need for the United Nations is not only manifest to everyone, but there are clarion calls for it to do more and to be more inclusive, representative and democratic, calls to which Belize adds its voice.

My country gained its independence largely in consequence of a resolution of the United Nations calling upon the United Kingdom to grant us our independence by the end of 1981, thereby bringing to an end more than 100 years of colonial administration. But whereas we attained our political independence in September 1981, our sovereignty over our homeland is still being threatened by a territorial claim dating back to the post-1940s by our neighbour Guatemala.

We therefore find the theme for this session's debate a timely and fitting one, namely, bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means. Happily, I can today inform the Assembly that the Governments of Guatemala and Belize both have agreed to a recommendation of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States to allow the Guatemalan claim to be adjudicated upon by the International Court of Justice if that is the will of the citizens of our respective countries, as expressed in simultaneous referendums to be held on 6 October 2013.

The resolution of the territorial differendum between Belize and Guatemala will not only consolidate Belize's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also enhance the peace and security of our subregion and be conducive to the strengthening and deepening of our regional integration process.

Belizeans are a peace-loving people. We abhor conflict. We believe in the rule of law. And we have faith in the United Nations.

With almost half of our population under the age of 25 and approximately 37 per cent under the age of 18, our nation's future and destiny are inextricably tied to the welfare of our children. And in order for them to attain their full potential, they must be properly nurtured and fed with balanced, nutritious meals. They must be safely and comfortably housed and they must be properly educated and trained, beginning from the time they are in the cradle. Our children must be trained and educated especially in science and technology. They must be trained to think creatively, to be fiercely competitive, to be industrious and to be prudent in the management of our resources. Our Government is convinced that it is only with this type of training and development that our citizens will be able to compete successfully in the world market and generate the wealth that is required to transform our society into a truly developed nation. If we fail our children today, we are setting ourselves up to fail in our common future.

With a view to attaining development objectives, our Government has initiated some ambitious, comprehensive pro-poor policies. For example, our Government is committed to a programme to ensure that low-income Belizean families do not have to face the difficult choice between sending their children to school or buying food. Qualifying families in underserved rural or urban areas can already rely on our conditional cash-transfer programme and on our food pantry programme. We provide education subsidies to families of children attending secondary school. We continue to emphasize and expand early childhood education and to improve access to alternative education. We are investing in improving the quality of the health care to which our citizens have access.

As a small State that took its place among the nations of the world only 31 years ago, Belize is experiencing all the growing pains that naturally afflict the young. Furthermore, our situation is aggravated by the fact our population is less than 350,000 persons, who trace their origins to all over the globe and are consequently multi-ethnic, multi-faith, multilingual and multicultural. With such a diverse population, the urgency of social cohesion cannot be overstated. When we add to this mix the challenges which today confront us all, occasioned by natural disasters such as climate change and by man-made ones such as the global financial collapse and transnational criminal activity, it becomes readily apparent that it is wholly beyond the capacity of any one Government to discharge its obligation towards its citizens solely through national initiatives and devices and solely with domestic resources.

For this reason, the Belize Government has embraced the multilateral system and our cooperation partners around the world. We are partnering with them in many fields, including economic, social, environmental and humanitarian, in our perennial quest to better secure all our citizens and develop them to their fullest potential. In this regard, United Nations funds, programmes and agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF, UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Health Organization are working tirelessly with countries like Belize to carry out the decisions of the international community and support efforts to meet the aspirations of our people. Belize avails itself of this opportunity to thank all our development partners for the tremendous contributions they make daily to the security and development of our country and people.

We know that more can and, indeed, must be done to raise our ambitions in delivering for the poor, for the needy and for the vulnerable. It is therefore urgent that we move to shape a post-2015 development agenda that reflects our equal stake in a common future, addresses

the concerns of the wealthy and strong, and meets the needs of the poor and the vulnerable.

Belize remains fully supportive of all regional initiatives. We have sought and obtained membership in the Organization of American States, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Central American Integration System and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. We work closely in all these subregional groupings on the issues of concern to us such as climate change, security and economic development. And here we feel constrained to point out that the impact of climate change on our region has been direct, dire and devastating, compelling us to join forces with our CARICOM partners and with the wider Alliance of Small Island States to advance our interests in the climate change negotiation process. In that connection, Belize is proud of its contribution as host nation of the CARICOM Climate Change Centre, which is tasked to provide technical and scientific advice to inform subregional policy positions in executing adaptation and mitigation projects in our subregion and to raise awareness of the deleterious impact of climate change in our respective countries. We thank the staff of that institution for the sterling work they are doing.

With respect to the nefarious enterprises of transnational trafficking in humans, drugs and arms, Belize subscribes to the view that a regional response is imperative to combat these pernicious scourges. Our countries are not the markets for these illicit commodities. Our countries do not benefit from the immense profits generated by these criminal enterprises, yet we bear the burden of having to divert scarce resources, badly needed for development, to combat the activities of these merchants of death and destruction. Indeed, our countries are overwhelmed by the grim tasks which now befall us of having to mend the shattered lives of our children and of mourning their untimely deaths. That is why Belize is committed to the implementation of the Central America Regional Security Strategy and to working with our partners to ensure that the Strategy has the level of support necessary to guarantee that it is effective.

Our region, Central America and the Caribbean, has been labelled as among the most violent regions of the world, with homicide rates that have reached crisis levels, occasioned largely by the use of small arms and light weapons. But almost all small arms and light weapons found in our region start out as legally manufactured and legally traded arms. Every Member of the United Nations is involved in some measure in this trade, which we believe is of dubious value to mankind. It is therefore deeply regrettable that, despite what appeared to be an emerging consensus and despite the underlying global urgency of a multilateral response, the conclusion of an arms trade treaty has so far been beyond the reach of the international community. It is urgent, in our view, that we redouble our efforts to break the gridlock and reach the compromise necessary to arrive at a consensus on an arms trade treaty as soon as possible.

The States of Latin America and the Caribbean are almost all classified — wrongly and unjustly, in our view — as middle-income countries. That is a generic classification that masks the varied challenges our countries continue to face arising from poverty, high levels of income inequality, economic vulnerabilities and debt. As a consequence, all our countries have been calling for a change in paradigm so that the classification of countries as middle-income countries no longer guides development cooperation. We urge all our development partners to heed this call and address this situation.

Finally, we would like to echo the call of other Members of this institution who have advocated the lifting of the economic embargo against Cuba, which continues to fetter the development of that sister Caribbean nation and its people.

Belize also notes and joins those positive voices that support Taiwan. We therefore urge Taiwan's full participation in the United Nations.

We ask also that urgent attention be given to the concerns of the people of Israel and Palestine, whose legitimate expectation to live peaceful, fruitful lives continues to be frustrated. And we stand in solidarity with the citizens of the Middle East, particularly those in Syria, in their quest for those democratic freedoms to which we all aspire.

As we move ahead to take on the new challenges that will emerge during the sixty-seventh session, as we redouble our efforts to address the long-standing problems our world faces, and as we renew our faith in the multilateral system, the role of the Assembly and of our United Nations Organization will become increasingly critical and relevant. This is the only body that is truly universal in character and which commands legitimacy and authority. The entire world looks to the United Nations to solve the multitudinous problems

which beset mankind. In the circumstances, the United Nations is simply just too big to fail in the discharge of its singular obligation: to safeguard the well-being and safety of humankind and planet Earth.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Makei (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We often invoke the phrase "the spirit of San Francisco". We do that when we speak and think about positive aspects of international relations. Indeed, the message sent from the 1945 Conference in San Francisco offered immense hope to the generation that had just survived the most horrible war ever experienced — hope for building a fundamentally new world. Justice was intended to replace violence, cooperation was to replace lawlessness. The United Nations, founded in that city, was called upon to become the key element of a new order.

Have the hopes, born in San Francisco, come true? To some extent, they have. After all, today there is no sign of the sharp ideological confrontation that characterized the twentieth century. Nor is there the direct, open conflict between the major Powers that had marked all previous centuries with its violence. What is more, such scourges as colonialism, slavery and apartheid have been irrevocably consigned to oblivion.

But the spirit of San Francisco was about something more than just preventing the recurring mistakes of the past. First and foremost, it was a message about a promising future. Unfortunately, that is precisely what has failed to become a reality. Why? Reinhold Niebuhr, an outstanding American philosopher who was writing in those fateful times, noted that general community is established only when the knowledge that we need one another is supplemented by the recognition that the other form of life, or that unique other community, is the limit beyond which our ambitions must not run.

Today that point is as insightful as it was then. Some countries see neither the limits of their foreign policy nor forms of statehood other than their own. And that is exactly what gives rise to many of today's geopolitical problems. States that refuse to follow patterns imposed from the outside and choose to defend their real sovereignty must pay dearly for that right.

Take the case of Cuba. The historic choice to pursue an independent path of development that was made by its people more than five decades ago encountered rejection and economic blockade on the part of those who still believe, in the twenty-first century, that they can continue to write the history of humankind in the same manner as they did in the past. And that is not the only example.

Belarus is fully convinced that any attempt to make someone do something against their will is doomed to fail. Are we not learning the lessons of the past? After all, neither weapons nor wealth constitute the greatest source of power on Earth. That power stems rather from the spirit of self-determination. If a nation has embarked on its own path of peaceful and progressive development, then no external force is able to stop it in its tracks. Battles can be won against such a nation, but never wars.

The time of imperialism, in whatever lofty slogans it is now being dressed — democracy, human rights, good governance — is irreversibly past. Furthermore, today we are weighed down by global economic challenges, nearly all of which have resulted from a policy of so-called market fundamentalism relentlessly pursued by its proponents over the past four decades. Its major outcome is a steady rise in inequality at all levels. Essentially we are witnessing the great divergence. Clearly, the situation resembles a slowly ticking time-bomb of future mass upheavals fraught with unpredictable consequences.

Unfortunately, the current economic woes are structural and therefore unlikely to be quickly and decisively resolved. That is attested to by the fact that the crisis persists all over the world four years after it began. The measures adopted over that period have failed to do much to remedy the situation. Yet, what is far more disturbing is that the countries whose policies had nothing to do with market fundamentalism have also experienced severe hardships. Because of the growing global interdependence of all aspects of international life, they simply have no other option.

We call attention to another chronic ailment of modernity, of a moral nature. Double standards in the foreign policy of the world Powers have become a norm. As a result, those major world players are willing to go to great lengths to cater to the interests of their "friends". Yet they advocate the forced imposition of democracy and human rights on their adversaries. Guided solely by their own interests, the players who were shaking hands with you yesterday openly contribute to your downfall today. In considering human rights situations in other

countries under a microscope, those players have refused to acknowledge the obvious faults in their own countries. In other words, we have come to witness the rise of unscrupulous and barbaric behaviour in foreign policy that is worthy of the teachings of Machiavelli himself.

It is unfortunate that the United Nations, by and large, has been sidelined in that context. Nevertheless, it has not been the fault of the Organization. The brainchild of San Francisco has simply not been allowed to function in the manner conceived by its founders.

Is there a way out of the seemingly hopeless situation? We are certain that there is. The current challenges have not become insurmountable yet. We will be able to overcome them. However, that will require us to revive the spirit of San Francisco. We should return to the principles and foundations, which could serve as the building blocks for a better world today. Multilateralism, justice and cooperation are as relevant today as they were in 1945.

So, what in practical terms must be done? Belarus does not pretend to have exhaustive answers. We would like just to draw attention to four areas that, in our view, are most crucial: the rule of law, politics, economics and the environment. First, to establish the rule of law globally, the system of international law must become fully functional. Forged through centuries of suffering, it is the foundation without which all other elements of modern civilization cannot operate. Having signed the Charter of the United Nations, the world's countries committed themselves to abide by the principles of international law. In other words, they refused to live any longer under conditions of destructive anarchy and lawlessness.

International law has been shaped as a historic compromise between the interests of all States. It may be supplemented and revised only if all States agree to do so. There should be no place for arbitrary interpretations that seek to subordinate international law to private interests. Let us bear in mind that such behaviour leads to infringement of the interests of other international actors. That is why no trendy concepts such as humanitarian intervention or responsibility to protect can justify interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

Secondly, in political terms, we need a stable and predictable global order. It is up to us whether we will have one. Global systems cannot establish and manage themselves — they result from human action. At this point we are living in a system that may be viewed as a dysfunctional multipolarity. Indeed, we are forced to witness a rising number of global players that are proving unable to cope effectively with increasing global demands.

If we fail to restructure the situation, then we will most likely end up with a scenario that is even worse — something that resembles the dark era of the Middle Ages but aggravated by ever more dangerous transnational threats and challenges. Thus, again we return to the perennial question: how is it possible to build an effective global order in a world that lacks a global government?We can offer an idea. A response would involve addressing the structural issue by means of a functional approach. Let us try to devise an effective global system by tackling specific functional problems. After all, is it not the case that all positive-minded global stakeholders have an interest in addressing fewer problems or eliminating them altogether?

We are deeply convinced that global partnerships will provide the means whereby we realize that vision. They can bring together multiple players on the world stage in a common effort against specific transnational threats and challenges. So let us begin working on and implementing functional partnerships on each of the issues. Indeed, my country has already been doing just that, for instance, in the fight against human trafficking within the framework of the global partnership against slavery and human trafficking proposed by Belarus some time ago.

Thirdly, there is the economic dimension. Mass protests across the world, like the Occupy Wall Street movement, testify to public rejection of the prevailing development model. This is hardly surprising; after all, the model was built with the interests of corporate capital in mind. Clearly, the classic recipe of Adam Smith does not work in a modern world. Contrary to general expectations, the invisible hand of the market has not led to universal public well-being. The experience of the past few decades indicates that the invisible hand contributes to the enrichment of the corporate sector alone, while impoverishing others.

The global economy of the twenty-first century is too sophisticated to be left to the whims of market forces. That economy requires a reasonable balance among its various elements. As far as the balance per se is concerned, it cannot be established by default, someone must do it. Only a State is able to accomplish that task,

and more crucially, a strong, socially oriented State that does not live by borrowing from future generations, as is currently the case in some advanced countries.We are convinced that a State-based paradigm, as we suggest, will permit the severe imbalance to be redressed. Likewise, it is key to significantly reducing poverty in the world.

Finally, what is required of us in terms of the environment? Climate change is the central and defining challenge of today's world. This is the wall that separates current and future generations from a prosperous future. Our efforts in all other areas will prove futile if we fail to tackle this core challenge. We must preserve the life-giving ecosystem of the Earth. This, therefore, is where there is the greatest need for comprehensive international cooperation.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was held in June. The Conference's decisions essentially marked the start of a new green deal that is expected to rally all stakeholders for common action. We need to move forward decisively to implement its individual elements. It is, above all, about elaborating sustainable development goals and ensuring the transfer and integration of green technologies. In the context of the follow-up to Rio+20, the formulation of a comprehensive United Nations energy agenda must be seriously considered. We believe it would contribute to an urgently needed comprehensive approach to addressing the interrelated issues of climate change, energy and food security.

The United Nations is the natural place for the implementation of all the ideas articulated above. No other international body possesses such universal legitimacy. Let us therefore, at last, empower the United Nations. We are certain that the United Nations will then be able to realize with dignity the vision set forth in San Francisco so many years ago.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Phandu T. C. Skelemani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Skelemani (Botswana): Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to join preceding speakers in expressing our felicitations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. Let me also seize the opportunity to sincerely commend his predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, of the State of Qatar, for his skilful stewardship of the sixty-sixth session. My delegation is confident that under the President's guidance and wise leadership, the General Assembly will achieve a successful and fruitful outcome. I therefore pledge the full support and cooperation of my delegation to him, in the discharge of his onerous responsibilities.

Botswana is among the developing countries that have been adversely affected by the 2008 global economic and financial crisis. Consequently, we were compelled to reorder our priorities and also defer implementation of various approved projects in our National Development Plan, some of which were of strategic national importance. In that regard, we continue to be concerned that many of our traditional donors who helped us to progress to where we are today, have virtually abandoned us following Botswana's graduation to higher middle-income developing country status. Contrary to the perception that Botswana is an economically well-off country, we now, more than ever before, need development assistance, on account of the varied nature and gravity of the challenges we continue to face.

With respect to the African continent, Botswana has followed with concern some recent peculiar developments. The military coups in Mali and Guinea-Bissau early this year are a sad reminder of what we thought was a closed chapter of the dark days of African politics driven by self-interest. Those developments seriously undermine the significant progress which Africa has made to date in embracing and consolidating democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. We therefore call on the African Union to remain firm and resolute in its rejection of unconstitutional changes of Government on the African continent, and we implore the international community to give full importance and full support to the African Union in that regard.

Elsewhere on the continent, we particularly welcome the recent agreement between the Sudan and South Sudan on the implementation of the African Union road map, aimed at resolving outstanding issues in the relations between the two countries. However, we remain concerned about the fragile security situation, and we therefore appeal to both parties to exercise maximum restraint and to commit to honouring the terms of the road map. Although the appeal is made to both sides, we are very much aware that the Sudan is the main cause of the instability between the two countries.

The catalogue of incidents of provocation and blatant acts of aggression against the Republic of South Sudan by the North that has led to instability in that region has been typical of the Sudanese regime for many years.

We live in times when our common well-being is seriously compromised by such threats as nuclear proliferation, terrorism, climate change, environmental degradation, underdevelopment and pandemic diseases, coupled with the effects of the global economic and financial crisis and internal conflicts. The resolution of the myriad of challenges and threats confronting mankind requires urgent and concerted action by the international community. Because of its universality, the United Nations commands the requisite legitimacy and moral authority to provide guidance and leadership in addressing those threats and challenges. It is therefore imperative that the United Nations of the twenty-first century respond effectively to present realities and effectively handle future challenges.

We believe that the international community should act and speak out strongly and forthrightly against human rights abuses and atrocities wherever and whenever they occur. In that regard, my delegation observes with deep regret that, over the past few months, the world community has watched helplessly and failed hopelessly to intervene as Syria descended into protracted anarchy. In the process, the Syrian people have been subjected to a cycle of violent repression and some of the worst human rights abuses and atrocities known to mankind.

Even as we speak, the violent crackdown and bloodshed in that country continue unabated. Al-Assad has displaced more than a million Syrians to satisfy his lust for power. He has caused around 300,000 Syrians to flee into neighbouring countries because of his criminal acts. He has slaughtered 20,000 of his citizens in order to remain President. He has killed men, women, children and babies to achieve that. The international community has, regrettably, failed to respond collectively. And Syria remains a Member of the United Nations, a body with the expressed objective of defending humankind. That surely cannot be right. Syria's allies in the Security Council and in the region need to be equally condemned.

The uprisings in the Middle East, commonly referred to as the Arab Spring, have demonstrated that no amount of force can suppress the will of the people forever. The situation in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt, where the popular will of the people has ushered in democratic dispensations, attests to that.

Concerning Libya, which had to engage in an internal conflict to rid itself of a brutal dictator, we commend the Libyan people and their allies in the military coalition that imposed a no-fly zone in order to remove Colonel Al-Qadhafi and his regime.

My delegation is of the view that given its mandate to maintain international peace and security, the Security Council should assume the high moral ground in defending the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity, such as those currently being committed in Syria. The principle of the responsibility to protect, as expressed in Security Council resolution 1674 (2006), should be forcefully applied wherever crimes against humanity occur. In that connection, my delegation condemns in the strongest possible terms the persistent vetoes by China and Russia of successive Security Council resolutions aimed at putting pressure on the Syrian leadership to cease its heinous crimes against its citizens. We therefore call on those members of the Council to live up to their responsibilities, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter. We urge the international community to act swiftly to save the people of Syria from further unwarranted bloodshed.

Botswana will continue to sponsor and support the various General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions aimed at addressing the situation in Syria, as a practical demonstration of our unwavering commitment towards a resolution of the Syrian crisis. It is for that reason that we join forces with like-minded countries in calling for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court for investigation, so that those responsible for crimes against humanity can be held accountable. Al-Assad and his regime should be removed as soon as possible. We must encourage the opposition to unite and to form a transition administration that we can all recognize.

We wish to commend Turkey and the other countries that have taken on the burden of accommodating Syrian refugees, have spoken out against the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Syria and have responded, with others, to the plea of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for contributions. For its part, Botswana has made a modest contribution to UNHCR to help the humanitarian relief efforts for Syrian refugees.

We also wish to commend responsible human-rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, for the work they do in seeking to safeguard the principles that protect humankind. Their mission — to act as watchdogs in matters of safeguarding human rights — is a very necessary one. Similarly, we commend those humanitarian non-governmental organizations that work tirelessly, with meagre resources and under very difficult circumstances, to bring relief to refugees affected by natural and man-made disasters.

Human rights abuses and atrocities are not limited to Syria. It is in that context that we affirm our support for the International Criminal Court and urge it to continue to fulfil its mandate, including prosecuting those indicted for human rights abuses and crimes against humanity. We therefore appeal to States parties to fully cooperate with the Court in its efforts to bring the suspected perpetrators of such crimes to justice.

We wish to add our voice in condemning the violence that occurred following the release of a publication that offended people of the Islamic faith. There can be no justification for such a violent response. The violence itself caused offence to its victims. Retaliation against offensive expressions therefore cannot take the form of other offensive actions aimed at innocent parties. However, where democracy is defined as Government of the people, by the people, for the people — in other words, doing what is in the best interests of the people — how can it be in the people's best interests if freedom of speech results in insults?

Other freedoms, in a democratic dispensation, include freedom of association — but we cannot associate with terrorist or criminal groups without consequences, since it is not in the people's best interests to live among terrorists and criminals. Freedom of expression allows for protests — but only peaceful protests — in democracies, because it is also not in people's best interests to have violent protests; and in democracies consequences do follow if protests become violent. The same goes for freedom of the press, if it is abused, as it often is. There must be consequences, in order to protect people's interests from misinformation and attempts to discredit or defame them. With all such freedoms there must be limits. Democracy is supposed to be responsible. Causing offence and insult cannot by any stretch of the imagination be passed off as what we want in a democracy. Trying to justify irresponsible actions as permitted under any of these freedoms, including freedom of speech, is itself irresponsible.

Turning to environmental issues, we note the limited and disappointing progress made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in addressing sustainable development issues, as has been the case at similar summits in the past. As we all know, the world is facing the twin challenges of scarcity of resources and climate change. Those problems are particularly acute in Africa, owing to the high incidence of poverty there.

To respond to those big problems, which clearly need visionary solutions and strong partnerships for sustainability on a scale and with an impact that are unprecedented, my country took the important initiative of hosting in May the Summit for Sustainability in Africa. Participation was at the Head of State level, and included representatives of some of the most influential and significant private-sector stakeholders in the world. The Summit adopted the Gaborone Declaration, which, among other things, provides for policy improvements at both the Government and the private-sector levels, aimed at integrating the value of natural capital development. The Declaration also calls for increased private-sector investment in Africa to help reduce food insecurity, improve livelihoods and increase sustainability. We therefore call on the United Nations system and the international community in general to commit to implementing the Declaration.

There are many important and urgent issues affecting developing countries that must be addressed. They include technology transfer, funding and capacity-building in other areas, aimed at enabling such countries to adapt to the requirements of a green economy in the context of sustainable development. In that regard, we urge the developed world to help developing countries to address these critical issues and take accelerated action in order to deal with climate change and its causes in their economies.

However, we welcome the agreement to launch an intergovernmental negotiation process that will lead to the adoption of sustainable development goals as part of the post-2015 development agenda, when the implementation process of the Millennium Development Goals will have run its course. My delegation believes that the process for developing sustainable development goals should be synchronized with the 2013 review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend the work done by environmental organizations worldwide in their efforts to save the planet from climate change and its negative effects.

Botswana participated in the ill-fated United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in July, whose purpose was for Member States to agree on common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional weapons. We believe that, when adopted, an arms trade treaty will complement the United Nations programme of action for combating the proliferation of arms and ammunition, which continue to cause untold suffering.

Before concluding, I wish to state that Botswana fully supports the call for implementing the Assembly's successive resolutions on lifting sanctions against Cuba, something we believe is logical and long overdue.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Winston Lackin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Lackin (Suriname): On behalf of Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname, I avail myself of this opportunity to extend to Mr. Vuk Jeremić my congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. The wealth of experience that he brings to this body will certainly assist him in successfully discharging his duties. We pledge our full support and cooperation.

Allow me to salute his predecessor for his skilful leadership at the sixty-sixth session. We wish him well in his future endeavours. To Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon we pledge our support for his valuable contribution in advancing the purposes and principles of the Organization.

In his annual statement last week, in which he introduced the 2013 national budget, the President of Suriname highlighted Suriname's strengths and the opportunities and challenges we are facing as a young, vibrant member of the international community. As refiners and exporters of crude oil and its derivatives, as well as producers and exporters of gold, a combination of windfalls in earnings related to the trade of those commodities and the application of prudent fiscal policies, have resulted in a politically and economically stable environment. That stability in turn has become conducive to solid domestic and foreign investments in the more sustainable sectors, in which agriculture and tourism score high. The design and construction of relevant infrastructure demonstrate Suriname's potential to be a player on the supply side of strategic commodities.

President Bouterse also presented a social package in which education and health care figure prominently. He made the point that strong international ratings are encouraging indicators for investors. However, the citizens of Suriname who lack the right opportunities will share in the achievements only if the Government is able to present them with a package comprising job-oriented education at an academic as well as a vocational level, adequate health services, sports facilities, access to potable water, information and communications technology facilities and proper waste disposal. The challenge of financing such an improved social package makes it necessary to empower our production and service sectors by providing funds and know-how to our entrepreneurs.

Suriname, as a young nation, is experiencing an ongoing decolonization process that involves both its structure and its mindset. Building a nation of half a million people constitutes an enormous challenge when at least seven different ethnic and cultural traditions originate from the Americas, Africa and Europe, while a considerable part of the population traces its roots to India, Indonesia, China and the Middle East. .

Suriname is known for the presence of a synagogue located next to a mosque in the heart of the capital Paramaribo, while Christian churches coexist with Hindu temples and places of worship with a strong African affinity. We are proud to state that we have been able to convert that challenge into a unique and exemplary benefit and that the divide-and-rule policy of colonial days is gradually disappearing, making way for mutual respect, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, which redound to the advantage of all our citizens.

Suriname is a country blessed with an exuberant array of biodiversity. That splendid gift of the Almighty must be cherished and protected to the fullest extent. It needs to be mapped out in a way that allows for responsible use. The challenge we face is responding to the genuine developmental needs of our people, while at the same time respecting and preserving biodiversity for future generations, and indeed for humankind.

My country has committed itself to that cause by, among other actions, creating a nature reserve of 1.8 million hectares. We have accepted the obligation

to educate our small gold miners in the use of modern technology that will not only prove more lucrative and safe but also respect the need for a clean environment, allowing for potable water and profitable agriculture. Suriname must remain green and smart.

Suriname is very much aware of the fact that while we have solid advantages as a nation, we can only survive and prosper by adapting to a world that is becoming more and more interdependent. Having been blessed with oil reserves, trillions of cubic metres of fossil water reserves, along with hundreds of rivers, swamps, creeks, arable land and minerals, including gold, copper, granite, rare earth and more, Suriname has become a focal point in view of the ever-growing scarcity of those commodities.

In order to maintain and enhance our political stability, we must deepen and widen our eco-commercial position and be able to keep our country and people safe from any outside intervention and interference. Suriname has engaged in a serious quest for integration with its immediate neighbours — Guyana, France and Brazil — at a bilateral and, wherever possible, tripartite level. Suriname is also a devoted participant in the historic movement of regional integration that is growing in form and substance. We are active members of the Union of South American Nations, the secretariat of which will be based in Suriname as from July 2013.

We are committed to the creation of a Caribbean Community multinational corporation, giving a more meaningful basis to the single market and economic goals put in place since 2006. As one of the founding members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, we continue to be dedicated to the integration mechanism of the Americas, remaining committed to the principles and objectives of the Organization of American States.

Although our region is making enormous strides in furthering democracy and development, we must draw the attention of the international community to the lack of progress in assisting one of the most disadvantaged countries in the Western Hemisphere, namely Haiti. We call on the international community to honour its pledges to assist the Government and people of Haiti in their efforts to rebuild their beloved country.

Furthermore, our quest for integration will never be complete if we continue to accept the isolation of our sister nation, Cuba, as a consequence of the unjustly imposed economic and trade embargo. Once again, we firmly call for an immediate end of those coercive measures, which cause so much suffering to the people of Cuba.

When Suriname became a Member of the United Nations 36 years ago, we were little aware of the importance of a number of issues not specifically dealing with decolonization. Now we have grown in our understanding. We realize that a properly functioning United Nations, including a democratically based Security Council, has the potential to become the single most important stabilizing factor in a world that has moved from bipolarity to multipolarity. In the world of ever-shifting economic, political, diplomatic and military Powers, the themes of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly were appropriately chosen.

We specifically want to draw the Assembly's attention to the need for dialogue in situations of conflict. In our understanding, it is not easy for Powers that have grown accustomed to controlling other nations to grasp fully what it means to move away from dominance and dependence to interdependence and the need for dialogue in solving real or alleged conflicts. Both the United States of America and the Federative Republic of Brazil clearly endorsed the concept in their statements at the opening of our general debate.

We urge all Member States in general and the former colonial Powers in particular to accept the new reality of our world by categorically refraining from applying their own standards in judging the outcome of other countries' democratic structures and aspirations, disrespecting the internationally accepted principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of nations all over the world.

It is within that framework that I quote the closing remarks at the presentation of the 2013 national budget by Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname:

> "As regards the sovereignty of our beloved Suriname as an independent nation, our principal task is none other than to respect and to defend the sovereignty of our nation against all violations and attacks from outside.
>
> "Whenever and by whomever our sovereignty is being challenged, our legitimate Government has no other duty than to defend and safeguard the entrusted sovereignty of the country".

The United Nations was built on the ashes of the Second World War, and we pledged to save successive generations from the scourge of war. The peaceful settlement of disputes is the only avenue through which we can ensure that the planet will be saved from annihilation. That principled stand must be applied to all areas of conflict, whether the conflict is in the Middle East, Africa, the Americas or anywhere else in the world.

The target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals is fast approaching. The year 2015 will be a decisive year when world leaders will gather once again to assess the implementation of the commitments made. We underscore the importance of creating well-being for all and providing greater opportunities for the vulnerable in our society by giving full access to high-quality education at all levels and affordable and high-quality health care and services, as well as realizing the commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

It is necessary to increase the ability of women all over the world to bring about change, to ensure that they can exist in an environment free from violence and conducive to their well-being, including access to decent employment, services and housing.

We acknowledge the global burden and threat of non-communicable diseases. In moving towards the full implementation of the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (resolution 66/2, annex), as well as other commitments we have made, we stress the importance of multisectoral actions, strengthening health systems, ensuring the availability of adequate and sustained resources, as well as enhanced international cooperation through effective partnerships. Suriname has increased its efforts in the fight against those often overlooked silent killers.

Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development concluded without an agreement on a clear commitment with regard to the financing of sustainable development. That is a very serious matter, considering the threat of climate change, among others, to a successful outcome of the efforts of small States like Suriname to achieve sustainable development. The international community cannot abandon its obligation to provide the necessary means to combat the serious consequences of overconsumption, pollution and carbon emissions, which threaten to undo our achievements aimed at protecting the environment and securing the well-being of our peoples. We continue to expect the United Nations to spearhead the efforts for technical assistance and to advance continued dialogue.

Suriname is deeply concerned with regard to the basis on which countries in development are classified in the international financial institutional framework. Such classifications, without due consultations, negatively affect the type and level of assistance that a country can receive from international financial institutions. We can only characterize those decisions as undemocratic and as a virtual punishment of our achievements in improving our socioeconomic situation.

In conclusion, I wish to solemnly declare that Suriname will always put its faith in multilateralism through its unwavering support for the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Joseph Bandabla Dauda, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Dauda (Sierra Leone): It is a distinct honour for me to convey the sincere regrets of my President, Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, who, on account of unavoidable circumstances, was unable to address the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating the President on his election to direct the affairs of this session and to assure him of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation throughout his tenure. Allow me to commend his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and to thank him for the skilful manner in which he efficiently conducted the affairs of the last session. My profound appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts in advancing the United Nations agenda to make the world a peaceful and safer place for humankind.

The President's choice of the theme "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" is a timely wake-up call for the United Nations to fully embrace the fundamental principle upon which our Organization was established. Indeed, only with such adjustments and the practical

manifestation of our collective commitment to peaceful coexistence can we, as a global family, successfully tackle the myriad of prevailing global challenges. They include poverty, hunger, the gross and systematic violation of human rights, extremist fundamentalism, terrorism and transnational organized crime, as well as the reconstruction and strengthening of fragile States and economies emerging from conflict. In that context, we should remind ourselves that, a little over a year ago, the Assembly adopted the landmark resolution 66/291 on mediation that recognizes its growing usefulness as a means of preventing disputes from escalating into conflicts and as a cost-effective tool in the peaceful settlement of disputes and the prevention of conflicts.

Amid such security challenges and global economic uncertainties, the African continent continues to strive hard to contain and to address the resurgence of conflicts in the region by peaceful means. At the regional and subregional levels, the year under review has been marred by sporadic terrorist strikes by extremists, leading to the extensive loss of life and massive destruction of property, including coveted world heritage sites, and the recent killing of the United States Ambassador and three other Americans in Libya. Sierra Leone strongly condemns such brutal and cowardly acts and will continue to work closely with all partners, particularly within the framework of the Mano River Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations, in seeking a lasting solution to that scourge.

Until recently, the use of preventive diplomacy in the maintenance of international peace and security was not used to its fullest potential by the United Nations system. Rather, it was used more as a tool in crisis management. I am, however, heartened by the present impetus and would like to take this opportunity to commend the role of the Secretary-General, his Special Representatives and the crisis-management operations and missions around the world, as well as the increasing role of the AU, subregional organizations and international contact groups, in tackling crisis situations that have emerged globally in recent times.

Sierra Leone will continue to wholeheartedly embrace mediation and other conflict-prevention initiatives as a key and indispensable tool in settling disputes and in preventing and resolving conflicts. The lessons learned from our experience have enhanced our conviction in the core principles of democracy, human rights and good governance as prerequisites for political stability, sustainable peace, security and development. We therefore remain strongly committed to the rule of law, respect for and the protection of human rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women, equal access to justice, fighting corruption with zero tolerance and pursuing the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To that end, we are committed to ensuring participatory governance, conducting free, fair, transparent and credible elections, and combating transnational organized crime in all its forms.

Sierra Leone therefore views with disappointment the fact that the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty ended without a negotiated consensus on the treaty's adoption. The Sierra Leone delegation believes that we must all earnestly endeavour to adopt a well-considered and balanced treaty with adequate provisions to effectively regulate the transfer of conventional weapons. If we continue to delay in that respect, we face the risk of their continuous use in committing grave violations of national and international law, which has the potential to destabilize peace and security. We therefore urge Member States to consider our moral obligation to humankind as our key guiding principle and to sincerely commit to contributing to the establishment of mechanisms to prevent the diversion of such weapons into the illicit market.

In three years, we will reach the target date of 2015 for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. For many Member States, particularly those of the global South, the voyage has been rough and, at times, turbulent. Worse still, the effects of the food, fuel and financial crises that struck the global community in 2008, as well as the impact of climate change, conflicts and deadly pandemics, have further exacerbated the situation and compromised the determination and efforts of developing countries, especially least developed countries (LDCs), to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

We commend Brazil on successfully hosting the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). We also applaud our solidarity and flexibility during the negotiation process, enabling the incorporation of LDCs and conflict-affected countries in the Rio+20 outcome document (resolution 66/288, annex). We look forward to a similar spirit of solidarity in defining sustainable development

goals that take on board the concerns of the most vulnerable members of the community of nations.

Despite the onerous challenges facing the global community, Sierra Leone has recorded significant progress in strengthening its political and economic governance, including the improvement of its social indicators. We have made substantial progress in implementing the President's Agenda for Change (2008-2012), which covers the priorities of our national development aspirations, as well as key peacebuilding priorities, in tandem with the United Nations Joint Vision for Sierra Leone.

The ongoing foreign direct investment in various sectors of the economy, notably the mining sector, is brightening the prospects for the economy. Hopefully, it will place Sierra Leone among the fastest growing economies in the world in the next few years.

The Agenda for Change continues to provide a strong partnership link between Sierra Leone and the United Nations, as well as other international development partners. To date, its implementation has had a great impact on peacebuilding and on laying the foundations for sustainable development and the consolidation of peace.

Sierra Leone today is considered a showpiece of best practices in donor coordination and a success story in peacebuilding. In that regard, we reiterate our call to the international community to continue to invest in our success in the spirit of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, which was agreed in Busan, and the need for special attention to be paid to countries emerging from conflict. The successor development framework to our Agenda for Change, entitled Agenda for Prosperity, is anchored on the New Deal and is well under way.

In its short existence to date, the peacebuilding architecture has proven its worth as envisaged by the leaders at the 2005 World Summit, whose goal was to help countries emerging from conflict make an irreversible transition from war to sustainable peace. As one of the first countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda, Sierra Leone has charted a path that can serve as a learning model for others. In that regard, we strongly believe that strengthening peacebuilding will help to better safeguard countries from relapsing into conflict and sustain peace beyond the life of peacekeeping missions. It will also help ensure that the enormous investments that Member States make in peacekeeping operations will achieve their intended result.

Sierra Leone continues to uphold the principles of interreligious tolerance, peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. At the national level, we have enhanced political stability by strengthening good governance institutions, giving them sufficient leverage and latitude to deliver on their respective statutory mandates. That arrangement has earned the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone an "A status" accreditation from the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions. In that regard, we remain focused on our obligations to report to international treaty bodies and have therefore submitted our initial report with regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, while work is well under way on our reports in compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Along those lines, we recently established a national commission for disabled persons, consistent with the relevant provisions of the 2011 Disability Act, enacted the 2012 Sexual Offences Act to address the specific issue of sexual violence against women and girls, and passed into law the 2012 bill on arms and ammunition to regulate gun ownership so as to ensure compliance with the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. A gender-equality bill is also in process for enactment.

I commend the support of the United Nations and the international partners for the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has made a number of critical contributions to the advancement of the rule of law at both the national and the international levels. In particular, we compliment the Special Court for bringing to trial perpetrators of crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law committed in Sierra Leone during the course of our 11-year conflict. Sierra Leone, the United Nations and the international community can be proud of the Special Court's immense achievements. With our continued support, the Special Court can complete its remaining work.

President Ernest Bai Koroma, in his address to the General Assembly at the opening of its sixty-sixth session, underscored the imperative of peacefully

settling disputes in Africa and the world at large by emphasizing that the world is so interconnected in trade, politics and the social spheres that a single nation's upheaval could affect many other countries (see A/66/PV.20). It is against that background that we, as a country, have continued to nurture closer ties with our sister States in the Mano River basin in order to deepen cooperation and collaboration and address issues of common concern, ranging from transnational organized crime to border disputes. The recent decision by the Presidents of Sierra Leone and her sister Republic of Guinea to demilitarize the Yenga border area and establish a joint committee of the two countries in order to ensure a final peaceful resolution of the Yenga problem is consistent with our commitment to the peaceful resolution of international disputes. Indeed, our steadfast commitment to global peace and security is evident in our participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan and Timor-Leste.

The 2012 presidential, parliamentary and local council elections scheduled to take place on 17 November are barely 46 days away. With the support of our bilateral and multilateral partners, preparations are in full swing for the conduct of the third round of such elections within the decade following the end of our civil conflict. The Government is fully aware that the conduct and outcome of the elections will be a critical benchmark for assessing the level of our gains in the area of peace consolidation and democracy. The Government, relevant stakeholders and our development partners are therefore expressly determined to exert a collective effort and use every available opportunity to ensure that we put solid mechanisms in place for the peaceful conduct and achievement of transparent and credible democratic elections. It is in that regard that, in May this year, all key stakeholders in the country committed themselves to a credible and violence-free process by signing the declaration on the 2012 Elections. We have thus consolidated the electoral laws and established electoral offences courts to ensure the legitimacy and credibility of the electoral process.

As Coordinator of the Committee of Ten Heads of State of the African Union for the reform of the United Nations Security Council, I am pleased to report to the General Assembly that, at the last AU Summit held in Addis Ababa, African heads of State reaffirmed their strong commitment to the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration containing the African common position on the reform of the Security Council. To that end, we are committed to building alliances in support of the African common position with various interest groups and Member States engaged in the intergovernmental negotiations, with a view to achieving reform of the Security Council as soon as possible. In that pursuit, member States of the African Union have been called upon to include the issue of Security Council reform among the priorities in their foreign policies.

In that respect, Africa continues to engage in the intergovernmental negotiations with an open-door policy aimed at correcting the historical injustice suffered by Africa as the only continent not represented in the permanent-member category of the Council and at the same time underrepresented in the non-permanent category. Since the Security Council remains at the centre of global governance in the maintenance of international peace and security, it is both imperative and compelling that the international community recognize the need described in the 2005 World Summit Outcome to make the Council more broadly representative, efficient and transparent in order to enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions, as well as the need to democratize the Council's decision-making process and correct the lingering historical injustice inflicted upon the continent. In that regard, we urge the wider United Nations membership to work with Africa to urgently address that injustice. Africa is not being unreasonable in its demand, and we all know that procrastination on the matter has led to a travesty of justice and fair play, which undermines the dignity of our peoples.

We are determined at the national level to surmount all impediments on our way to development and to delivering fully on all the projects in our "Agenda for Change". We are confident that with sustained support from our bilateral and multilateral partners, we shall promote socioeconomic progress and provide a better standard of living for our people in an atmosphere of peace and security. What we cannot afford at this time in our history is to fail in our duty and obligation to provide peace, security and sustainable development for our people.

At the global level, as we look at the work that lies before the sixty-seventh session, let us not lose sight of our shared obligation to ensure a peaceful and secure world by resolving our differences through constructive dialogue and thus strengthen the existing

mediation mechanisms provided in the Charter and institutionalized within the United Nations system.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See.

Archbishop Mamberti (Holy See) (*spoke in French*): As I congratulate the President on behalf of the Holy See on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, I have the honour of conveying warm greetings from His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, who wishes for him and all members the blessings of all-powerful God.

At a time when the world is witnessing a disturbing increase in bloody regional conflicts, the Holy See is particularly pleased to note the central theme that has been chosen for the work of this session, namely "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means".

Since the establishment of the United Nations, a tight web of structured legal relationships has evolved, covering virtually every aspect of the relations between States and of life in the societies within States. In that regard, the Charter of the United Nations, the major human rights treaties and the treaties governing humanitarian law, along with the Vienna Conventions on the law of treaties and diplomatic law and the key conventions on disarmament, may be viewed as a nearly universal legal corpus that promotes social relations based on the law and that furthers durable peace.

That is a historically unprecedented development and a genuine achievement of the United Nations; it stands as a credit to the United Nations and certainly as one of its most successful achievements with respect to the aims enshrined in the Preamble and first Article of the Charter.

Over the course of the 67 years since the establishment of the United Nations, the world has undergone profound transformation. Growing technical and economic interdependence, along with the exponential development of new forms of communication, has led to the advent of what has commonly been known, ever since the middle of the twentieth century, as the global village: a diverse and continuously evolving village that has experienced astonishing development but that has also seen terrible injustice. In that regard, the labour of legal construction undertaken by the United Nations is a worthy response that promotes the development of that global village, a response that deserves the continued and wholehearted support of Governments and social organizations.

Human history has always presented paradoxical or conflictive situations that have given rise to frustration and feelings of injustice. Today, in a context of generalized interdependence, the disparity between wealth and poverty is more pronounced and unacceptable than ever. The disorderly expansion of technical and economic progress has intensified the gap between those who have the education and the means to advance and those who lack both. The multiple legal and economic ties that unite nations are not sufficiently just and equitable, and they have become a conveyor belt for the serious economic and financial crisis, which has spread as quickly as a forest fire, affecting the most vulnerable first. For some of the world's people, resorting to crime and terrorism or waging war in the name of ideological, ethnic or cultural beliefs seems to be the easiest, if not the only available way to escape poverty and become the heroes of the global village. Such acts of violence are abetted by the perverse use of communications technology and by the excessively easy access to the tools of war.

If, in the 1990s, the state of legal and political progress allowed us to believe that the danger of nuclear war had receded, today the likelihood of regional conflicts with unpredictable outcomes has once again created a threatening atmosphere that should impel us to intensify our efforts to establish a truly constructive dialogue within the international community.

During the period of the Cold War, the United Nations was a meeting place and a point of discussion and balance between the opposing Powers. The Organization managed to support the decolonization and independence of a large number of new States and to mitigate, and even at times resolve, regional, bilateral and civil conflicts in a context that was nonetheless marked by severe ideological confrontation. At the same time, United Nations agencies made an important intellectual, political and judicial contribution to the universal recognition of human rights and strengthened cooperation for development and regional economic integration. Those advances constituted fundamental progress towards strengthening the rule of law, which itself provides a favourable framework and is the best guarantor of human rights and peaceful international cooperation.

Allow me here to welcome the Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (resolution 67/1), which was adopted at the beginning of this session. The 67 years since the establishment of the United Nations also include a distinguished history of humanitarian interventions, peacekeeping operations and, more recently, peacebuilding operations. Also of special importance for the fate of humanity as a whole have been the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency aimed at promoting universal accession to the Treaty, controlling the implementation of the Treaty and facilitating international cooperation on the peaceful use of the atom.

Over the past 20 years, the United Nations, together with regional organizations, has made an essential contribution to resolving a number of urgent situations, particularly in Africa, by collaborating with the African Union and other institutions of that continent. Nonetheless, the current reality presents us with a United Nations system without the strength of unity and persuasion that could legitimately be expected of it; a system in which, unfortunately, power relationships are played out to the benefit of specific strategic interests.

Yet the possibilities that emerged at the end of the Cold War seemed to portend a possible strengthening of the institutional and political presence of the United Nations in the service of world's most critical challenges, such as climate change and the preservation of the environment. How is it possible that, despite universal adhesion to the Charter of the United Nations and the essential treaties, we are still unable to establish a just and true form of global governance?

The Holy See would like to offer a moral answer to that question by calling attention to the importance of the values that, of necessity, underlie all human societies. Indeed, before engaging in political or technical considerations, it is important to ask whether the crises currently convulsing the planet are linked to a crisis of trust in the collective values enshrined in the very Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, the question arises whether the crises afflicting the planet are linked to a serious anthropological crisis, which is to say the lack of a shared understanding of what it means to be human.

Today we are witnessing a weakening in the practical reach of the purposes and principles set out in the Preamble and Chapter I of the Charter. I note in particular saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, practicing tolerance with a spirit of good-neighbourliness, uniting strength for the maintenance of peace and security, recourse to peaceful means to settle disputes, in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, and cooperation to solve international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms.

The loss of trust in the value of dialogue and the temptation to favour a priori one party in national or regional conflicts endanger respect for the legal mechanisms of the United Nations. However, the pre-eminence of the values affirmed by the Charter should lead to the adoption of all means possible to guarantee the protection of the most vulnerable, uphold the rule of law and human rights, and safeguard ancient cultural and religious balances.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The urgency of the situation is all the more obvious given the events taking place in the Middle East, especially in Syria. There can be no solution outside the rules of international law and humanitarian law and implementation of mechanisms established by the Charter of the United Nations. All parties concerned must not only do everything possible to facilitate the mission of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, but also to guarantee humanitarian aid to populations in distress. The international community must unite its efforts to ensure that all parties concerned substitute negotiation for recourse to arms and demand effective respect for religious freedom, human rights and all fundamental freedoms.

As Pope Benedict XVI recently reiterated during his trip to Lebanon, we should import ideas of peace and creativity, we should find ways of accepting each person in his otherness, we should therefore make visible before the world the respect that religions have for one another, respect for man as a creature of God, and love of neighbour as fundamental to all religions. In that way, using all possible means, including material assistance, we must help to bring an end to war and violence so that all can help rebuild the peace. On his return from Lebanon, the Holy Father called on Arab

countries, as brothers, to propose workable solutions that respect the dignity, the rights and the religion of every individual. Those who wish to build peace must cease to see in the other an evil to be eliminated. It is not easy to see in the other a person to be respected and loved, and yet that is necessary if one desires to build peace, if one desires fraternity.

Moreover, only an international community strongly rooted in values that genuinely uphold human dignity can provide viable solutions to the new types of conflict perpetrated by transnational groups, which spread a pseudo-religious hegemonic ideology contemptuous of individual rights and civil peace. We think of the instability and the recent terrorist attacks in some countries of Africa and Asia, or the collusion between drug trafficking and terrorism in other regions of the world.

Beyond even situations of conflict, today all States, rich and poor, see their stability threatened by the economic crisis to which no true and sustainable solution has been found to date. Just a few years ago international discussions were essentially about potential ways to share the resources of the rich countries, where well-being appeared to be firmly established, or about the legitimate recognition of the rights of developing countries. The debate was about finding the right balance between free trade and financial assistance; the transfer of know-how, technologies and direct aid to the poorest populations; the clash of ideas about the foreign debt of the poorest countries; the role of the World Trade Organization and its connections to the United Nations; the reform of multilateral financial institutions; and comprehensive access to essential drugs.

That unavoidable debate must be continued, even if today it is overshadowed and made more complex by the issues related to financial stability, whose impact is global. In fact, we can all see that the financial stability of the most developed societies has been seriously endangered, especially because of shortsighted economic policies often based only on maximizing short-term profits.

The threat of collapse of financial systems in economies that were until now the most prosperous has serious consequences for social cohesion. It has led to the resurgence of old fantasies such as exacerbated nationalism, populism and xenophobia. Add to that the tragedy of millions of people weighed down by hunger, the lack of basic health care and abject poverty, as well as of vast populations living in inhuman conditions, displaced populations and refugees, among whom are thousands of children.

Given the difficulty of finding common solutions that respect the principles of self-determination, independence, and the equality of States and the right of peoples, the anthropological crisis of which I spoke has emerged, that is, a lack of conviction in the supreme dignity of every individual, even when they have just been conceived or are in a vegetative or terminal state.

It is an illusion to want to create true harmony among peoples, to guarantee peaceful coexistence and real cooperation between States if we confine ourselves to a vision of mankind that — without in theory denying the importance of the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual — consigns the profound dimension of the person and his uniqueness to the rank of secondary factors, and insists on vague collective concepts that reduce the individual to the simple category of consumer or agent of production in the market. A human being is not a mere number in the masses of the global population. And the masses of the global population cannot be viewed coldly or with suspicion as a danger threatening the environmental and social balances. We are talking about men and women, each with dignity and rights. Ideological visions that do not take that into account lead irreparably to social disintegration and conflict.

In that sense, we must reject attempts to view the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the interpretation of human rights treaties, on the basis of a limited and relativist vision of humankind that, cleverly using ambiguous expressions, threatens the right to life and presents a deconstruction of the family model based on the union of a man and a woman and oriented towards procreation and the education of children. In the end, those attempts risk the irremediable weakening of the credibility and legitimacy of the Organization as a universal tool for sustainable cooperation and peace.

It is of the first importance to provide an effective solution to the open debate on the reform and improvement of the functioning of United Nations organs in order to revitalize its ability to anticipate conflicts and resolve them peacefully. However, that will be possible only with a constantly renewed effort to return to the founding vision of the Organization.

Sustainable peace will not be possible without each and every one of us engaging in a constructive dialogue directed toward achieving dignified and decent living conditions for all human beings.

That can be done only through a shared belief with regard to fundamental values that guarantee respect for human life. In that regard, respect for religious freedom is essential, within national public life as well as internationally. Reason tells us that each person has transcendental dignity, which brings with it freedom to determine one's own ultimate destiny and which national and international authorities, as well as social mechanisms, must fully respect. That is why actions by Governments and international organizations must necessarily strive to promote comprehensive human development, creating legal, economic and social conditions that genuinely reflect the importance of human dignity and its transcendental dimension, both at the personal level and collectively.

Religion should not be thought of other than as a factor of peace and progress, a living force for the well-being of all. Indeed, it leads human beings to overcome every egotistical interest and to devote their energies to the service of others, including for peace among peoples. That is why all forms of fanaticism and exclusivism and all acts of violence towards one's neighbour are an exploitation of and a deviation from religion. Moreover, history has shown that a biased concept of secularism, or tolerance that would limit religious matters to the private sphere, can only undermine the bases for peaceful coexistence, at both the national and international levels.

The Holy See has been involved in international cooperation activities since they were first given institutional structure. We established our Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York in 1964. The reason for its presence as a subject of international law in this intergovernmental institution is first of all its desire to offer to the international community a transcendent view of life and social relations, recalling in particular the dignity of the individual and his fundamental rights, in the first place the right to religious freedom. The international community has always welcomed this contribution, which allows common initiatives to put back into a profound perspective, in which the underlying unity of the human family and the call to the generosity of individuals and peoples must always be reaffirmed.

The President took the Chair.

It is in that spirit that the Holy See wishes to offer its contribution to the present session of the General Assembly, aligning itself with the wish you expressed in your inaugural address, Mr. President, that all Member States, which share the responsibility to implement the principles and objectives of the Organization, would renew their commitment to resolve disputes by peaceful dialogue and not by resorting to confrontation. Only in that way will the aspirations and hopes of all be achieved. Only in that way can the United Nations play its indispensable role in peace and development.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pak Kil Yon, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Pak Kil Yon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I expect your proficient stewardship will guide the Assembly to success.

At the outset, I would like to express our profound gratitude to the heads of State and Government and peoples of the States Members of the United Nations, the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, representatives of United Nations bodies and of many countries for deep condolences they extended to us at the demise in December last year of the great leader of our people, Kim Jong Il. General Kim Jong Il devoted tireless efforts until the last moment of his life to firmly safeguarding the dignity and sovereignty of our country and the prosperity and happiness of its people, as well as to accomplishing the cause of global independence and world peace and stability.

Today, having hailed dear respected Marshal Kim Jong Un as the Supreme Leader of the Party, State and Army, our people are striving to build a prosperous and powerful socialist State. Dear respected Marshal Kim Jong Un safeguards the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula by carrying forward the Songun policy of General Kim Jong Il in good faith. He wisely leads the general advance march for developing our economy, improving people's livelihood, and devising a development strategy of our own style and innovative methods with his insight into the world.

Our dear respected Marshal Kim Jong Un is firmly determined to make our people, who have overcome manifold hardships, enjoy a happy life to their heart's content in a prosperous socialist State. Dear respected Marshal Kim Jong Un is implementing independent foreign policy and opening up a new chapter in the development of relations with other countries that are friendly to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, not bound by the past. Our people are following dear respected Marshal Kim Jong Un with absolute trust in him and are vigorously advancing to the final victory with full conviction in and optimism about the future, single-heartedly united behind him.

The founding of the United Nations in the last century gave hope to mankind following a tragic world war — hope of achieving common prosperity by ensuring peace and security and developing cooperation among States based on the principle of sovereign equality. Yet today, after the first decade of the new century, that desire of the mankind has yet to be achieved. At present in international relations, high-handedness and arbitrariness are becoming ever more undisguised, and the use of force and acts of State terrorism aimed at infringing on sovereignty, interference in internal affairs and effecting regime change are being perpetrated under such pretexts as non-proliferation and humanitarian intervention.

We are now witnessing the resurrection of the outdated international relations of the first half of the twentieth century, when a handful of great Powers dominated the world by resorting to the use of force. This resurrection tarnishes the credibility of the United Nations, whose mandate is to ensure global peace and security.

The fact that the theme "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" was chosen for the current session shows the seriousness of the current international situation. The most serious issue in the international arena at present is a flagrant violation of the principles of respect for sovereignty and equality. Unless the high-handedness and arbitrariness of certain countries are thoroughly eliminated, it will be hard to say that the United Nations is fulfilling its role and function as a centre for coordinating cooperative relations between States based on the principle of sovereign equality as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The unjustifiable interference, pressure and use of force that violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and the right to self-determination and existence of Palestine should be rejected.

Democratizing the United Nations and, in particular, strengthening the authority of the General Assembly are urgent issues for enhancing the central role of the United Nations in international relations.

The Assembly resolution adopted long ago on dismantling the so-called United Nations Command stationed in South Korea and the resolution adopted annually on ending the United States blockade against Cuba remain unimplemented. These are typical examples that show the need to strengthen the authority of the General Assembly.

It is quite natural for the General Assembly, which represents the general will of all Member States, to supervise the overall activities of the Organization. In particular, it should be given the authority to undertake final review of Security Council resolutions related to peace and security, such as sanctions and use of force. The abuse of the Security Council as a tool for pursuing strategic interests by a handful of countries should never be overlooked. Last April, the United States took issue with our legitimate and peaceful space launch, which followed universal international law, and forced the Council to adopt an unjust statement. That alone shows how the Council has been abused.

Security Council reform, which is at the core of overall United Nations reform, is a matter that should no longer be delayed. It should be carried out in a manner that guarantees responsibility, transparency, impartiality and objectivity in its activities and ensures full representation of developing countries in its composition.

Other United Nations bodies in which double standards and the theory of force are extremely evident are the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Politicization, selectivity and double standards in deliberations on human rights should be put to an end. We should never allow the continuation of the practice whereby human rights situations of selected countries are either called into question or simply ignored in accordance with the political purposes and interests of the West and the Western standard values.

In the field of sustainable development, which is now one of the three targets set by the United Nations, the agreement reached in the United Nations

Conference on Sustainable Development, held last June in Rio de Janeiro, should be implemented. Practical measures should be taken to solve such issues as establishing fair international economic and trade relations, fulfilling official development assistance commitments, transferring environmentally clean technologies to developing countries and strengthening financial support.

Today, due to the ongoing hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a vicious cycle of confrontation and aggravation of tension continues to afflict the Korean peninsula, which has become the world's most dangerous hotspot, a place where a spark could set off a thermonuclear war. At the root of that hostile policy, which has lasted for more than half a century, towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea lies the intention of the United States to destroy the ideas and system our people have chosen and to occupy the entire Korean peninsula, in order to use it as a stepping stone in realizing its strategy of dominating all of Asia.

Since the day the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was founded, the United States has designated it an enemy and refused to recognize its sovereignty. Since then, it has pursued every kind of sanction, pressure and military provocation against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for more than half a century. Its hostile policy is most deeply rooted in the military field. No precedent can be found in modern history for the situation whereby the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States have continued as warring parties after hostilities ended and for more than 60 years altogether.

With a view to eliminating the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by force, the United States has already finalized various war scenarios, and is waiting for a chance to implement them, as it has outlined in a contingency plan to impose military rule after a military invasion. In accordance with those plans for military operations, the United States has staged various joint military exercises under different names in and around the Korean peninsula for several decades. A typical example was a combined military exercise named Ulji Freedom Guardian, staged at the end of last August and involving huge numbers of armed forces, which pushed the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of war.

It is only the patience and military deterrent self-defence capacity of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that have prevented the continued military provocations of the United States from turning into all-out war on the Korean peninsula. However, this does not mean that the patience of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is inexhaustible. Our people value peace and stability in pursuing their overall goal of building a prosperous and powerful State. But the dignity of our nation and the sovereignty of our country are even more valuable.

Our principled stand is based on reacting to an aggressor's reckless provocations with an immediate, corresponding strike in defence of our nation's dignity and sovereignty, and to respond to a war of aggression with a just war of reunification of the country. The realities of the situation on the Korean peninsula prove that we have been absolutely right to have built a military deterrent capacity for our self-defence, by tightening our belts in order to pursue the path of Songun and independence. Our military deterrent is a mighty weapon that defends the country's sovereignty and a powerful means of preventing war on the Korean peninsula, as well as a strong guarantee that enables us to focus our efforts on economic construction and improving people's livelihoods.

The only way to prevent war and ensure lasting peace on the Korean peninsula is to put an end to the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That policy is the root cause that has made the Korean peninsula the world's most dangerous hotspot, and it is the chief obstacle to lasting peace and security. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is also a product of that policy. None of these problems, including the Korean peninsula nuclear issue, can be resolved without first ending the hostile policy of the United States, which views the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as an enemy target and tries to stifle it at any cost. That is the essence of the process of our dialogue with the United States and a lesson we have drawn from practical experience.

Since the turn of the new century, North-South summit meetings have been held twice, amid the joyful enthusiasm of all our fellow countrymen. They resulted in the adoption of the 15 June North-South Joint Declaration and the 4 October Declaration, and created an atmosphere in which the desire for reconciliation, cooperation and reunification between North and South reached a peak. Soon after taking office, however, the new South Korean authorities annulled all inter-Korean

agreements, including the 15 June North-South Joint Declaration and the 4 October Declaration, which had been warmly welcomed and were fully supported by the entire Korean nation and the international community, including the United Nations. Furthermore, the confrontation between fellow countrymen and systems have caused an extreme deterioration in inter-Korean relations. The South Korean authorities rubbed salt in the wounds of our people, who had suffered such a huge national loss, even insulting our supreme dignity with acts of political terrorism, and leaving inter-Korean relations totally bankrupt. History will bring them to justice.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will join hands with anyone who truly desires the country's reunification and national reconciliation and prosperity. With responsibility and patience, and relying on the nation's concerted efforts, it is making every effort to realize the historic cause of national reunification by preventing interference by outside forces and any attempt by anti-reunification forces to achieve permanent national division.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to further strengthen and develop the relations of friendship and cooperation with all countries that respect its sovereignty, pursuant to the principles of independence, peace and friendship on which its foreign policy is based, and will actively cooperate with the efforts of United Nations Member States to secure world peace and stability and to achieve sustainable development.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Marco Albuja, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Integration of Ecuador.

Mr. Albuja (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to extend to you the congratulations of the Government of Ecuador on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, for which we will provide whatever support you need to help achieve the international agenda's commitments, especially those that have to do with revitalization of the Assembly.

We are participating in this important forum with the clear purpose of sharing our ideas and proposals for the international system that governs us. We are well aware that the United Nations system was conceived in the middle of the last century and that its structure is based on, among other things, the principles of humanism, multilateralism and the equality of States before the law. Since then, the great majority of countries have fought to see those principles complied with, but there have also been countries whose power has wrongfully enabled them to fail to live up to the principles and to their obligations within the system.

The world has changed substantially since the road map for the United Nations was designed, and its functions must adapt to the new demands of international relations, characterized by exchanges of information and communications and by interdependent economies. We believe the time has come to end the illegitimate political exploitation of United Nations bodies by certain Powers, which continue to exert political and economic pressure and even to intervene militarily in sovereign States whose Governments criticize the international status quo or focus on different ideologies from those promoted by some Powers, or whose public policies are opposed to the economic interests of large transnational companies. Such pressure delegitimizes the system and distorts multilateralism itself.

In the five years of President Rafael Correa's Government, Ecuador has regained sovereignty in decision-making on its internal and international policies, pursuing decisions that promote a horizontal relationship between countries with the same rights and obligations. In those five years Ecuador has supported peace. That is why we have expressed our concern about the terrible consequences for human beings that result from military interventions conducted by the Powers, and why we are calling loudly for dialogue and for respect for human rights and the people's self-determination in all countries in conflict. We have had enough of geopolitical visions that are imposed by force, destroying human rights. In that regard, Ecuador welcomes with great hope and enthusiasm the dialogue process in the sister Republic of Colombia, which is the bravest step that the Government of that fraternal country could have taken.

Today the world is experiencing constant changes in the distribution of power. New regional Powers have emerged in the past 20 years and have begun to play a decisive role in international politics and security. Russia, China, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Argentina, Indonesia, Venezuela and the developing world, in general, are now the drivers of the global economy. It is therefore a political imperative that multilateralism be strengthened and promoted with regard to respect and equality among States.

It is important to point out that Latin American countries committed to multilateralism, in response to unilateral actions that undermine international stability, have established regional institutions, such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America — Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. Such bodies are restoring the principle of universal representation in global governance and endowing it with new characteristics so as to adjust it to today's political and social reality. However, while such countries and organizations seek to keep the institution of inter-State work alive, the continuing unilateral actions of certain Powers without consultation jeopardize the ability of multilateral bodies to provide legitimate and valid responses to international needs and problems.

In that context, Ecuador believes that the weakening of the decision-making system in the United Nations undermines international law. Open dialogue is therefore needed in order to effectively reform our Organization. We believe that it is time to begin a structural reform of the United Nations that makes it more democratic and up to date and that prevents the political and illegal use of its bodies. The system will be truly democratic, as it claims to be, when everyone accepts that each country has a vote and that the majority decides in a democratic, free and sovereign way, without a small group of States that represents 2.5 per cent of the Organization's membership being able to veto the remaining 97.5 per cent.

We must of course restore the fundamental principles of the United Nations, namely, the legal equality of States, international social justice, unconditional respect for international law, the protection and defence of all human rights, cooperation and the promotion of the mutual interests of nations, respect for the sovereignty of States, the free self-determination of peoples, non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, the elimination of wars of aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue, without recourse to the threat or, worse still, the use of force. But, above all, we must restore the principle of collective action. As a result, we must give it values, such as democracy, universality and supranationality.

In order to be effective and efficient in its work to maintain international peace and stability, the new multilateralism should not uphold the veto power or the existence of an exclusive club, whose members are a small group of countries that decide the system's future and other measures that affect the remaining countries. The new system would require all countries, as equals, to be equally represented in decision-making that affected the international system. It should not allow non-compliance with international standards by some States, but must rather demand strict adherence to international law and full respect for international judicial authority as the only way of promoting peaceful coexistence among nations.

Ecuador supports the comprehensive reform of the United Nations system and the democratization of the international decision-making bodies. We advocate a comprehensive reform of the Security Council that includes decisions on membership categories, the veto issue, regional representation, the size of an expanded Security Council and its working methods, and its relationship with the General Assembly — in other words, a comprehensive change in its composition and operation. The idea is to make the Council representative, democratic and effective to enable the international community to have an appropriate collective security system. We believe that we must work on that proposal, study it, discuss it and decide on it together.

Our country also calls for a comprehensive revitalization of the General Assembly. We propose that its role as the main depositary of global sovereignty be fully recognized within the United Nations system since it is only there that all members are represented. The General Assembly should therefore have the ability to discuss and take binding decisions on all significant issues on the international agenda, including international peace and security.

An example of the imbalance and lack of democracy of the current United Nations system that clearly reflects the urgent need for its reform is the situation in which the abhorrent blockade on the sisterly Republic of Cuba continues because an economic and military Power is able to impose its will and political view despite the contrary decision of 186 countries. Then again, the United States cannot continue to include Cuba on its spurious list of countries that sponsor terrorism simply because of an ideological unwillingness to accept that the island has survived its forced isolation. Arbitrariness has played a great part in that issue.

Cuba has declared that its territory has never been used nor ever will be used to organize, finance or carry out terrorist acts against any country, including

the United States. Similarly, the prominent former United States President, Jimmy Carter, has stated that the role of Havana as a guarantor in the peace talks between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and the Colombian Government refutes any argument about the need for Cuba to remain on that list. The former President, whom we consider a friend of the Latin American cause, said that a more sincere dialogue could take place between the two countries if the United States were to remove Cuba from its list of State sponsors of terrorism. We share and support that view.

Consistent with Ecuador's recognition of the Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, my country supports the inclusion of Palestine as a full Member of the Organization. Likewise, Ecuador reiterates its support for the historic rights of the Argentine Republic over the Malvinas Islands. The specific and anachronistic situation of those Islands should pave the way for renewed direct negotiations with the United Kingdom, as called for by Argentina. That appeal has been reiterated in several resolutions of the relevant United Nations bodies.

For Ecuador, it is essential that disputes, including those related to borders, be resolved peacefully. Ecuador has successfully achieved that.

Ecuador has also worked to strengthen the fundamental institutions of international law, such as the inviolability of diplomatic missions, as provided for in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. I wish to recall that, a few weeks ago, the Government of Ecuador had an unexpected diplomatic dispute with the Government of the United Kingdom on exactly that issue. In response, Ecuador advocated that various multilateral forums adopt resolutions affirming that principle of international law. We must say with deep gratitude that Ecuador received the resolute support of the Governments of States members of UNASUR, ALBA and the Organization of American States and of other Governments, such as that of Russia, condemning any attempt at forced entry into or violation of diplomatic premises.

The Government of Ecuador accordingly condemned the terrible events of 11 September, when the United States diplomatic mission and consulate in Cairo and Benghazi were attacked by armed groups with a tragic loss of life, including that of the United States Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens. Ecuador stands in solidarity with the people of the United States and reaffirms its condemnation of those violent acts against United States personnel in Libya and Egypt. Once again, we declare our respect for the inviolability of the premises of diplomatic missions.

My country believes that it is essential for international organizations to support and promote the observance and development of all human rights. That should be their ultimate objective, not just a politically correct way to make a discussion attractive or to justify implementing a geopolitical outlook on different cultural realities. Human rights are a principle that is lived every day and that is constantly developed and upheld. It is a principle including all of humankind with no exception, no discrimination, no categories and no prioritization. The principle admits no reservations or double standards. It is either completely defended and we submit to it, or it is rejected. But conditioned, partial compliance is not admissible. We are, of course, speaking of the progressive development of international and national instruments governing human rights and the legal international bodies that ensure compliance with those instruments.

To write on paper that all men and women around the world are equal without applying it in practice is nothing but hypocrisy. Human rights, as a whole, can be summarized in the right to life. The question is: how many thousands of human beings must continue to be sacrificed in the name of the abstract principle without understanding, without really feeling what the concept is. When will humanity ask, for example, if the defence of democracy in its Western version or the accumulation of transnational capital and the expansion of organized crime constitute sufficient justification for the sacrifice of tens of thousands of human lives or for the destruction of the planet.

In order to guarantee the rights of human beings, deepen their social and economic development, and achieve the harmony of nature while being fully responsible towards all generations, Ecuador has changed some traditional policies since the adoption of the new Ecuadorian Constitution in 2008. We understand that we must overcome the archaic concept that the rule of law consists of laws carved in stone that were approved at some time in history but are obsolete and out of date today. The law cannot be abstract, because in essence it is a living thing needed to give security to human beings, and it cannot be

divorced from reality. That is why we also advocate that the standards that are part of international legal coexistence should be discussed and updated, because their forced application leads to chaos and weakens the rule of international law.

From that point of view, our Constitution calls on us to live in a constitutional State of rights and guarantees. The fundamental objective is what is called in the Quechua language *sumak kawsay*, or "the right to a good life" of people and nature, knowing how to live fully, without any discrimination. It is based on dignity, solidarity, equality and the complementarity of people, cultures, nationalities, people's social groups and countries in general.

It is the commitment to being human that calls on us to encourage tolerance, respect and full support for everybody, especially those afflicted with disabilities. Ecuador has been nationally recognized on that front, because, in the last five years, it has maintained the highest ratings for effectiveness in programme support and reintegration into daily life of our brothers and sisters with disabilities. The strength of our Vice-President Lenin Moreno Garcés in his battle against discrimination against people with disabilities has made it possible for him to be globally recognized. Admiration of his programmes has led to his being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Since human beings are at the centre of the covenant of the popular revolution, we have given full support to those who suffer persecution because of their political ideas and sexual preferences. My country has the largest number of refugees in Latin America and one of the largest numbers in the entire Western hemisphere. Almost 60,000 people living in Ecuador are refugees. We also have around 500,000 economic migrants. That has led to recognition and expressions of gratitude by United Nations bodies. Because people in the situation of being refugees and asylum-seekers have been incorporated into Ecuadorian society, they receive political and social protection as well as an economic subsidy from the Ecuadorian State.

Social groups that traditionally were discriminated against in Ecuador for ethnic or cultural reasons have also seen a substantial improvement in their situation. That is shown by the indicators for education, health and housing. But above all, President Rafael Correa has stressed that action to benefit the poorest is the main objective of State policy. The incorporation of social groups into the active life of the country has taken place, with full respect for their ancestral culture and their traditions, customs, beliefs and political views.

We are also one of the countries that has strengthened gender equality, the development of the rights of women, and the application of affirmative action measures that cut across public policies in all the functions of our Government. However, those successful changes have led to a reaction from sectors of traditional power, both inside and outside Ecuador. Just yesterday, we noted the second anniversary of an attempted coup d'état and assassination. But things have changed. The empowerment of citizens fully identified with the Government has made it possible to overcome this year's crisis as well as an international media campaign of criticism and misinformation on the activities and achievements of our country.

I would like to highlight from this rostrum that Ecuador is the first country in the world to have recognized the rights of nature in its Constitution. Nature stops being a passive object and becomes an active subject. In that connection, the Constitution of Ecuador states that Mother Earth, or *Pachamama*, where life reproduces and flourishes, has a right to full respect for its existence and the maintenance and regeneration of its vital cycles, structure, functions and developmental processes. By recognizing those rights, we close the circle of the complementary relationship with the rights of human beings. The Constitution of Ecuador has led to major progress in legal and environmental areas. It overcomes the human-centred vision of law prevailing in the world. We aspire to open a discussion in this forum aimed at preparing a universal declaration on the rights of nature.

In the environment, Ecuador is one of the leading promoters at the international level of environmental sustainability policies. We have developed new initiatives in the fight against climate change, such as the "net avoided emissions" mechanism. That has made the Yasuní-ITT initiative an innovative sovereign decision. We have also planned to protect natural resources and the cultures of several ethnic groups in the Amazon region and have accepted the responsibility to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

In that context, Ecuador has been a leader in the regional debate on a model for domestic sustainable development. At the same time, together with the regional Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas bloc, we have played a critical role within the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change, and we have noted the scant political will, especially in the countries in the North, to let themselves be subject to legally binding commitments to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Ecuador has proposed, on the international level, an alternative sustainable participatory development model.

When it comes to promoting human rights and the freedom of expression, the Government of Ecuador has been faithful to its tradition, which is to protect those who seek refuge in its territory or its diplomatic missions because they are victims of political persecution, and has granted diplomatic asylum to the Australian citizen Julian Assange in response to his request to the President of the Republic of Ecuador and after an exhaustive judicial assessment. That has been a unique opportunity for the world community to debate the process of asylum in that context and to observe the political, legal and human repercussions of its application within the framework of the strict respect for international law. Ecuador is proud of having taken a sovereign decision in a legal procedure that protects human beings anywhere in the world.

Our country promotes the reform of the multilateral United Nations system through example and not just in words. We have also undertaken an unprecedented institutional reform of our own. The results have been highly satisfactory, with outstanding levels of growth and poverty reduction. I want to mention just a few figures, so that members can have a clear idea of our achievements. Under the Government of the Citizens' Revolution, the poverty rate has been reduced from 36.7 per cent to 25.3 per cent, a reduction of more than 11 per cent. Extreme poverty, that is, abject poverty, has come down from 16.5 per cent to 9.4 per cent. We have reduced the Gini coefficient from 0.55 per cent to 0.47 per cent. For the first time in our two centuries as a republic, the extreme poverty rate for Ecuador's population is below 10 per cent. An annual education budget of $858 million has now grown by a factor of 5.1, to $4.366 billion. Payment of external debt is not more than 4.2 per cent of gross domestic product, while our spending on public social services stands at 11 per cent of gross domestic product.

Every international agency that has reviewed our macroeconomic numbers and social spending agree that the changes in our country are drastically improving the lives of our citizens. We have not settled for mere words, but, rather, our country's success story is written in concrete, practical actions as part of a national development plan, overseen and managed by the President of the Republic himself, that is bringing rapid change to our country — and without the usual social ills that result from the prescriptions of the international financial institutions. On the contrary, ours is a participatory model founded in solidarity.

We have not neglected foreign direct investment, which we believe essential to our development strategy, so long as it complements our national initiatives, including our national development plan. I state with pride that the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador is the first in the world to define legal security as a human right in itself, respect for which and the direct application of which are guaranteed by judicial, administrative and constitutional authorities.

Nevertheless, we believe that progress for Ecuador or for any other country is at risk if the international system, either because of general indifference or because of interests that run contrary to global well-being, feeds a new era of anarchy in which unilateral actions or geopolitical conflicts predominate. For that reason, we would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the need to rehabilitate and revitalize multilateralism, to upgrade international mechanisms and strengthen international law, so as to safeguard international peace and security and a healthy environment, which are the necessary ingredients for worldwide development and prosperity. We want to use this platform to urge the international community and the representatives of all the countries of the world to join in demonstrating the resolve, bravery and political will to drive the creation of a new international order — new in being more just, more open, more participatory and more democratic.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pham Quang Vinh, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): On behalf of the delegation of Viet Nam, I extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that under your stewardship this session will be crowned with success. I appreciate the excellent work done by the Secretary-General and welcome the outcomes of the sixty-sixth session, presided over by Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser.

To start with, we would like to welcome the theme proposed for this year's general debate, "Bringing

about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". This theme is of particular relevance in today's world, when instability and conflicts continue in various regions, especially in North Africa and the Middle East. The decades-long Palestinian-Israeli conflict lingers on and requires a satisfactory solution, including the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian State coexisting peacefully with the State of Israel. Progress has yet to be made in disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, while the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continues to grow. New, complicated developments are emerging in the Asia-Pacific region, a dynamically growing and important region of the world.

We believe that the success of this General Assembly session will significantly contribute to the primary goal of the United Nations, maintaining world peace and security. Accordingly, we must further uphold international law and strengthen compliance with it. Nations must strongly commit to the fundamental principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, particularly the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-use of force, as well as respect for the national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. We must promote dialogue and the use of peaceful means in the settlement of disputes, especially recourse to international and regional organizations and international legal mechanisms. And we must not accept the imposition of sanctions like those against Cuba, the removal of which the Assembly has repeatedly called for.

International law is an intellectual creation of the civilized world, which all States must respect and abide by in good faith. If international law is enforced, the risk of conflict will be minimized and sustained peace will be better secured.

Viet Nam therefore welcomes the important outcome of the recent High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (resolution 67/1), which reaffirmed that the rule of law is fundamental to political dialogue and cooperation among States and is the indispensable bedrock for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. Compliance with international law is an essential principle that guides the policies and actions of each nation, as well as the joint endeavours of the international community.

When we commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) later this year, we should further reaffirm our strong commitment to and compliance with that constitution of the seas, which contributes to the maintenance of peace, stability and maritime security, safety and cooperation.

The United Nations continues to play an indispensable role, entrusted to it by the international community, in the maintenance of international peace and security. Viet Nam commends the work done by the United Nations, especially in helping settle regional disputes and conflicts by peaceful means, including through the strengthened use of peacekeeping operations. We expect the Organization will continue to build further upon its experience in that area and promote a culture of peace and dialogue, to better resolve ongoing conflicts and prevent the eruption of new ones.

The United Nations must step up efforts in disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, while strengthening international cooperation and ensuring the right of States to use related technologies for peaceful purposes. Multilateral negotiating forums in this area, particularly the Conference on Disarmament, must be revitalized and intensified.

Furthermore, we should recognize the increasingly important role of regional organizations. In East Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continues to play a central role in the regional architecture and helps promote peace, stability and security in the region, including maritime security in the South China Sea. Viet Nam fully supports ASEAN's six-point principles statement on the South China Sea, which further reaffirms the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, respect for international law, particularly UNCLOS, the full implementation of the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and a timely agreement on a code of conduct.

Peace is the prerequisite for development. Yet it is sustainable development, including the end of poverty, the promotion of social justice and the elimination of inequality in international relations, which helps resolve the root causes of conflicts and lays the foundation for a sustained peace.

Today, the global economy continues to be in difficulty. The Doha Development Round has yet to make progress, while protectionism persists and the shortcomings of the international economic and financial

systems have yet to be overcome. As a result, many countries, especially developing countries, continue to face great difficulties in their development, including in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In that context, it is essential that we reaffirm our strong political commitment to ensuring the realization of the MDGs, the promotion of inclusive sustainable and green development, and the effective response to natural disasters, climate change and other global challenges.

The United Nations needs to strengthen global partnerships for development and take the lead in an inclusive process to formulate the post-2015 global development agenda, including the proposed sustainable development goals. In that regard, we urge developed countries to fulfil their pledges for increased development assistance and support developing countries in capacity-building.

This year, Viet Nam commemorates the thirty-fifth anniversary of its membership in the United Nations. Throughout that time, Viet Nam has consistently been an active and responsible member of the Organization, striving for peace, national independence, democracy, social progress and prosperity for all nations. Building on its 25 years of reform and important accomplishments, Viet Nam has been working towards a growth model that links economic development with social progress and environmental protection.

In the face of recent global economic difficulties, Viet Nam has taken steps to effectively maintain macroeconomic stability and ensure social security. Viet Nam continues to strengthen the rule of law and build a State of the people, by the people and for the people, which places the people at the centre and promotes their ownership and rights in all spheres.

Pursuing the policy of proactive international integration, Viet Nam continues to contribute actively to the work of the United Nations, ASEAN, the Non-Aligned Movement, the International Organization of la Francophonie and others. We also contribute constructively in multilateral forums in endeavours designed to respond to global challenges including nuclear security; disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; sustainable development; climate change; water, food and energy security; and the achievement of the MDGs.

Viet Nam has been implementing with good results the United Nations initiative of Delivering as One. To further contribute to the work of the United Nations, Viet Nam has put forth its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the term 2014-2016, and we look forward to the Assembly's support.

Viet Nam always endorses efforts to enhance the role and effectiveness of the United Nations to enable the Organization to become the true centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of the common goals enshrined in its Charter. We therefore support the continued reform of the United Nations, including the strengthening of the General Assembly as the most representative deliberative body, and of the Economic and Social Council in the field of socioeconomic development, as well as the expansion of Security Council membership and reform of its working methods.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.